

Quiet architecture of music exhibitions

Operational layers of space

THESIS BOOKLET

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Abstract

The main topic of this thesis is the examination of the interactions between exhibition design and architectural design. In addition to traditional architectural design work, since 2018, as a designer at the BAHCS architectural firm, I have had the opportunity to participate in the creation of music-themed exhibitions at the Hungarian House of Music (hereinafter: HoM). In this thesis, I attempt to formulate conclusions that are also valid for architecture by systematizing my experiences in exhibition design.

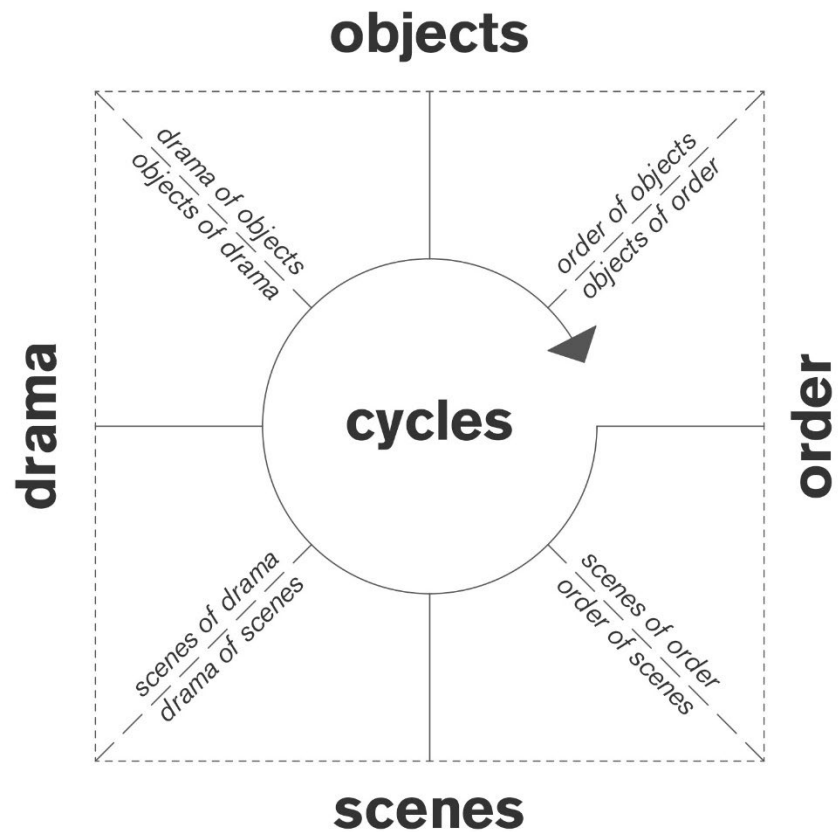
The term "quiet" has a dual role: on the one hand, it brings the world of sounds into the context of exhibition design and architecture, and on the other hand, in an architectural approach, it refers to the duality of quiet architectural background and quiet architectural speaking. Quiet architectural speaking becomes important in the narrative spaces of exhibitions because the physical entirety of the architectural space significantly influences the visitor experience. A completed exhibition is a coherent whole in which all content, spatial, and technological factors are interrelated and provide a balanced overall effect. Together, these factors can be referred to as the operational layers of space (OLS).

I will narrow down the types of exhibitions discussed here according to the most important characteristics of the exhibitions held at the HoM: The exhibition spaces are dark box-like (black box) halls with no windows, so the exhibitions are created in a dark environment. The exhibitions are mostly without collections, and the items on display are typically not works of fine art. These exhibitions are intended for the general public, and there is an admission fee to view them.

I examine the connections between architecture and exhibition design through five themes. In the first chapter, I attempt to organize the totality of physical effects and entities appearing in space within the system of physical dimensions of space (PDS), in connection with which I define the concept of spatial scene. In the second chapter, I approach the layers of content appearing in space and the creation of drama from the perspective of human perception. The third chapter discusses the theme of objects from the perspective of human perception, comparing the problems and possibilities of museum objects and object culture with architecture. The fourth chapter deals with the problem of cycles, starting from the issue of sustainability, which is closely related to the question of objects. The topics of creating, maintaining, and possibly losing order are closely related to the practice of architecture. In the fifth chapter, we discuss this topic by defining the micro and macro levels of order and comparing the top-down hierarchical order with the bottom-up weak order.

My goal was to develop a new flexible design system based on combining the lessons learned from exhibition design and architectural design, which could be applied to both design fields.

The topics of the chapters of the thesis represent the types of operational layers of space. At the intersection of the dual perspectives of exhibition design and architecture, five aspects were identified that are worth considering during the design process. With the compass diagram below, I attempt to organize the topics into a system. The theme of circularity is at the center, while the other four themes of the thesis appear in four directions, like points of the compass.



THESIS #1 – Scenes

Spatial scenes are composed of spatialities filled with physical effects and entities, the analysis of whose composition can help architectural design. The open and flexibly configurable system of the physical dimensions of space (the PDS system) can provide a starting point for analysis. Spatial scenes are always, everywhere, fully realized. Humans are optional participants in spatial scenes.

The systematization of physical effects and entities filling the space (the PDS system) was inspired by the complexity of the exhibition space scenes. In traditional architectural design, the architect knows what effects and factors to take into account, but designs for general conditions and usually has little to do with the exact content of the scenes that will be created in the buildings he designs, as these will be created with the participation of the building's users.

When designing an exhibition, however, it becomes important to work out the scenes, and this can also influence the architect's design approach. It can be said that scenes occur practically everywhere and all the time. Throughout our lives, we constantly participate in scenes that are created by the physical effects and entities in the above system. According to the PDS system classification, we can describe what effects and actors determine the functioning of a given scene. Of course, scenes can also occur without people.

THESIS #2 – Drama

Drama arises in people. Architecture provides a framework for the dramas of life, while exhibition creators - by creating drama - consciously strive to inspire learning points and transformation in visitors' thinking in relation to certain themes.

THESIS #3 – Objects in the light of interpretation

Buildings can be considered large objects containing spaces that can be accessed by people, and architecture can be considered a field related to object creation. The true value of objects lies in the human activities and pastimes associated with them. Objects and buildings can become mediums for conveying messages, capable of establishing connections between different eras and thus becoming important in terms of human perception.

During architectural design, we can strive to create a building with a strong design foundation, but we must be aware that countless, as yet unknown layers of meaning will be added to this design story during the building's lifetime. Future users of the building may perceive the environment we have created in a completely different way than we intended. A good response to this may be a "quiet" architectural approach that attempts to imagine the created environment from the perspective of its future users, without reference to the original design concept or narrative. A good starting point for this approach is to think about the old buildings in our environment, focusing not on the circumstances of their creation and construction, but on their role in the present. From an architectural point of view, the world of exhibitions can also be used as a kind of laboratory, where it is possible to continuously analyze and monitor people's reception.

THESIS #4 – Sustainable exhibitions

In contrast to the linear, chronological approach, strengthening the cyclical view of time is also important in architectural and exhibition design. Exhibitions, as communication platforms open to society, can be important venues for shaping attitudes towards sustainability.

The logic of cycles represent an important counterpoint to linearity and the concept of endless growth. The topic of sustainability is of fundamental importance in the present day, both in the reality of architecture, which is built from large-scale objects, and in the everyday world of objects, as well as in the case of exhibitions. The world of exhibitions, which is open to the general public, cannot lag behind the innovative solutions of the world of architecture and design; in fact, it must be at the forefront of shaping attitudes. In addition to the sensible but less visible solutions implemented in the exhibitions of the Hungarian House of Music, there is also a need for solutions that are more visible and perceptible to the general public. The Design Museum in London and other institutions that are spectacularly committed to sustainability are good examples of the application and presentation of an environmentally conscious approach.

THESIS #5 – Micro- and macro order

It is worth examining the issue of order at both the micro and macro levels. Micro-level orders with great potential but greater fragility, such as living organisms or human activities, are always surrounded by more flexible disorder at the macro level. In architectural design, it is necessary to examine which approach is appropriate for the task at hand.